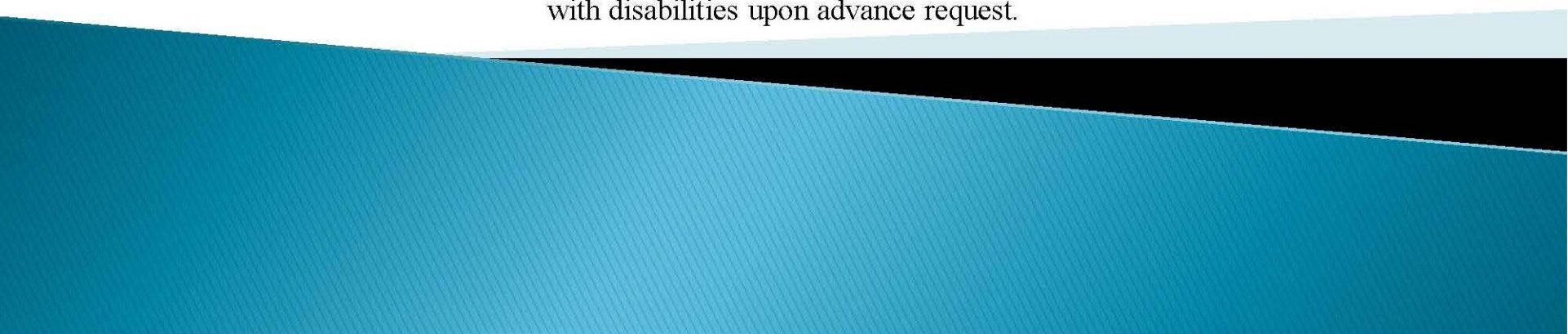# Conclusions from Neighborhood Meeting Initiative

The City of Worcester does not discriminate on the basis of disability. The Human Rights Commission will provide auxiliary aids and services, written materials in alternative formats, and reasonable modifications in policies and procedures to persons with disabilities upon advance request.

Background

- **July 2017**
  - Discussed Police Community Relations Initiative as part of annual Public Safety Work Plan

  - Created following action steps:

    - Attend meetings to understand their process and makeup
    - Research best practices/case studies
    - Design tools to gather additional information
    - Develop recommendations to enhance facilitation, attendance, effectiveness and other aspects of meetings

Background (Cont'd)

▸ September 2017–May 2018

  ◦ Commissioners/Volunteers distributed surveys to Neighborhood Watch Meeting attendees in 17 meetings

▸ June 2018

  ◦ Presented preliminary findings during joint meeting with WPD
  ◦ Identified initial recommendations based on available data

▸ July 2018

  ◦ Developed additional strategies to address limitations by increasing sample size and ensuring fidelity of implementation

Overview

▸ May 2018– May 2019

▸ Additional Data collected
▸ Expanded to Neighborhood Response Team and organizers

▸ Ultimately reached 32 of ~41 active meetings (78%)

Overview (cont'd)

- Qualitative data collected over a series of meetings, discussions and listening sessions
  - Worcester Police Department Neighborhood Response Team
  - Meeting Organizers (2 meetings)
  - Leadership Worcester
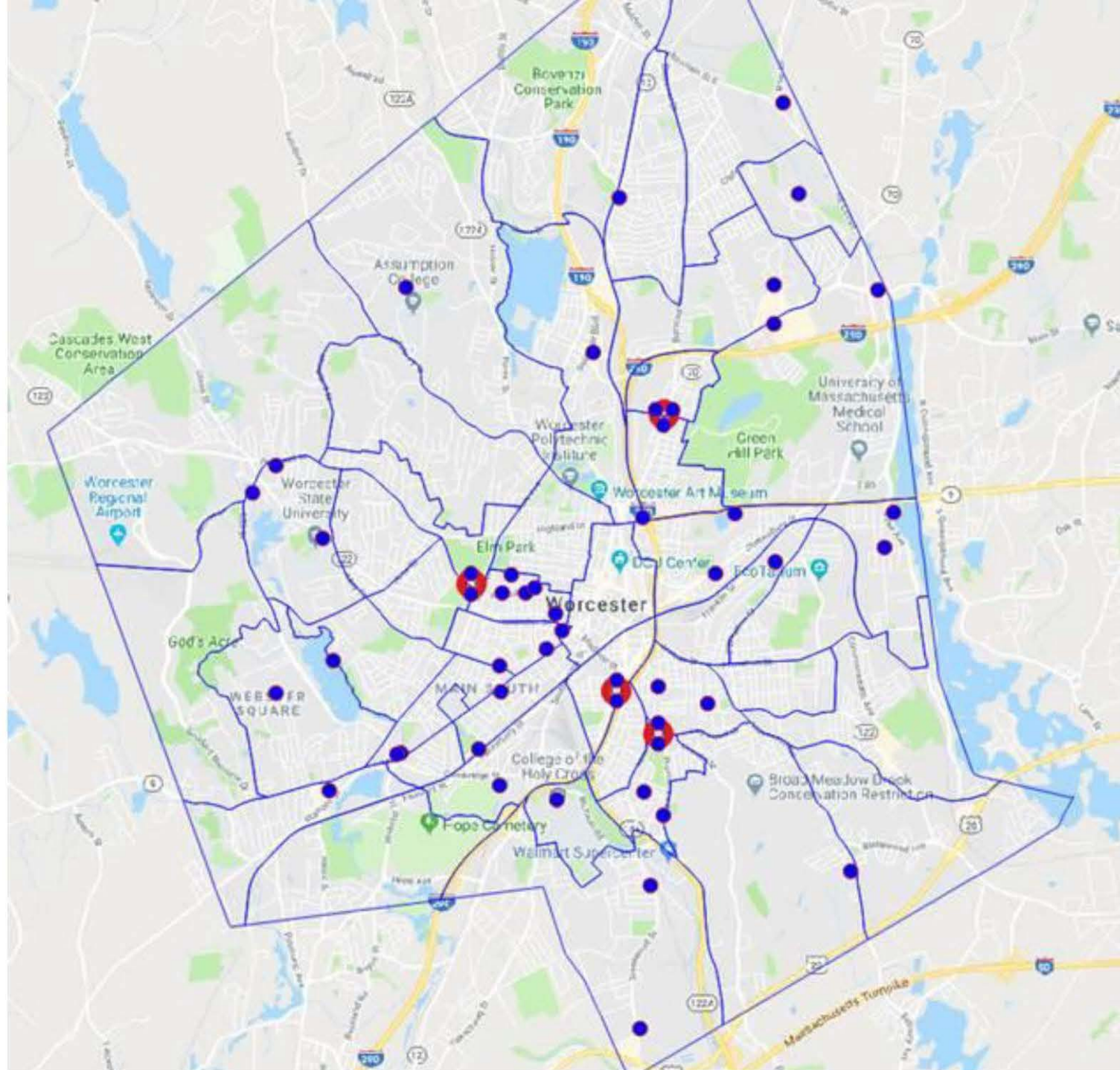 - Roundtable Discussions with Holy Cross students

- Purpose:
  - Compliment and elaborate on survey data
  - Evaluate and improve survey process
  - Identify additional questions, stakeholders, information not captured in survey data

Overview (cont'd)

- Brought 2018 findings and proposed 2019 process to Worcester Research Bureau
- Asked for feedback and additional ideas
- Proposed mapping meetings
  - Creating interactive map available on city's website
  - Residents unfamiliar with the meeting names could identify their meeting visually
  - Users could select meetings for additional information

Methods

- Observers/Survey Administrators:
  - Combination of commissioners, students, interns and city employees attended meetings and distributed the survey

- Survey distribution methods
  - Standardized written procedure for survey distribution
  - Each survey administrator provided in-person training

- Sample size: 322 total responses
  - 301 responses from meeting attendees
  - 8 responses from WPD Neighborhood Response Team
  - 14 responses from Meeting Organizers

- Sample Selection
  - 9 not sampled due to cancellations and schedule conflicts
  - 9 not scheduled during final quarter of the survey period
  - Survey went to entire Neighborhood Response Team (80% response rate)
  - Organizer surveys distributed at last 14 meetings attended

Attendee Survey Format

▶ **Unchanged from 2018**
  ◦ Added "African" as option under demographic information

▶ **Survey items captured various types of information**
  ◦ Basic information about meetings
  ◦ Open and closed-ended questions
    • How long and how often they'd attended
    • Additional offerings they'd like to see

  ◦ 12 statements presented in a Likert scale format

  ◦ Voluntary demographic information
    • Age
    • Race
    • Gender

Date: _____   Meeting Location: _____

Which of the following are offered at your meetings? (Check All that Apply)

☐ Written Agenda   ☐ Meeting Minutes   ☐ Transportation   ☐ Refreshments
☐ Written Feedback ☐ Email Updates   ☐ Child Care   ☐ Other: _____

How long have you attended Neighborhood Watch Meetings?

☐ Less than 1 year   ☐ 1-2 years   ☐ 2-4 years   ☐ Over 5 years

In the past 12 months, how many Neighborhood Watch Meetings have you attended?

☐ Every Meeting   ☐ Most Meetings   ☐ About Half   ☐ Less than half

Please (circle) the number that best corresponds to you

1- Strongly Disagree   2- Disagree   3- Neither Agree nor Disagree   4- Agree   5 – Strongly Agree

1.	It is easy to find information on Neighborhood Watch	1	2	3	4	5
2.	The location is convenient and easy to find	1	2	3	4	5
3.	The meeting day / time fits my schedule	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Meetings start on time	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Meetings are well-attended	1	2	3	4	5
6.	The meeting format is organized	1	2	3	4	5
7.	I have the opportunity to share concerns	1	2	3	4	5
8.	I feel comfortable sharing concerns	1	2	3	4	5
9.	I have shared concerns at Neighborhood Watch meetings	1	2	3	4	5
10.	Neighborhood Watch Meetings helped me with a problem	1	2	3	4	5
11.	I feel safe attending Neighborhood Watch Meetings	1	2	3	4	5
12.	I plan to attend future Neighborhood Watch Meetings	1	2	3	4	5

Which of these things would help you or others to attend Neighborhood Watch Meetings?

☐ Announcements on Social Media   ☐ Email Updates   ☐ Child Care
☐ More Convenient Meeting Times   ☐ Transportation   ☐ Other: _____

Additional comments: _____
_____

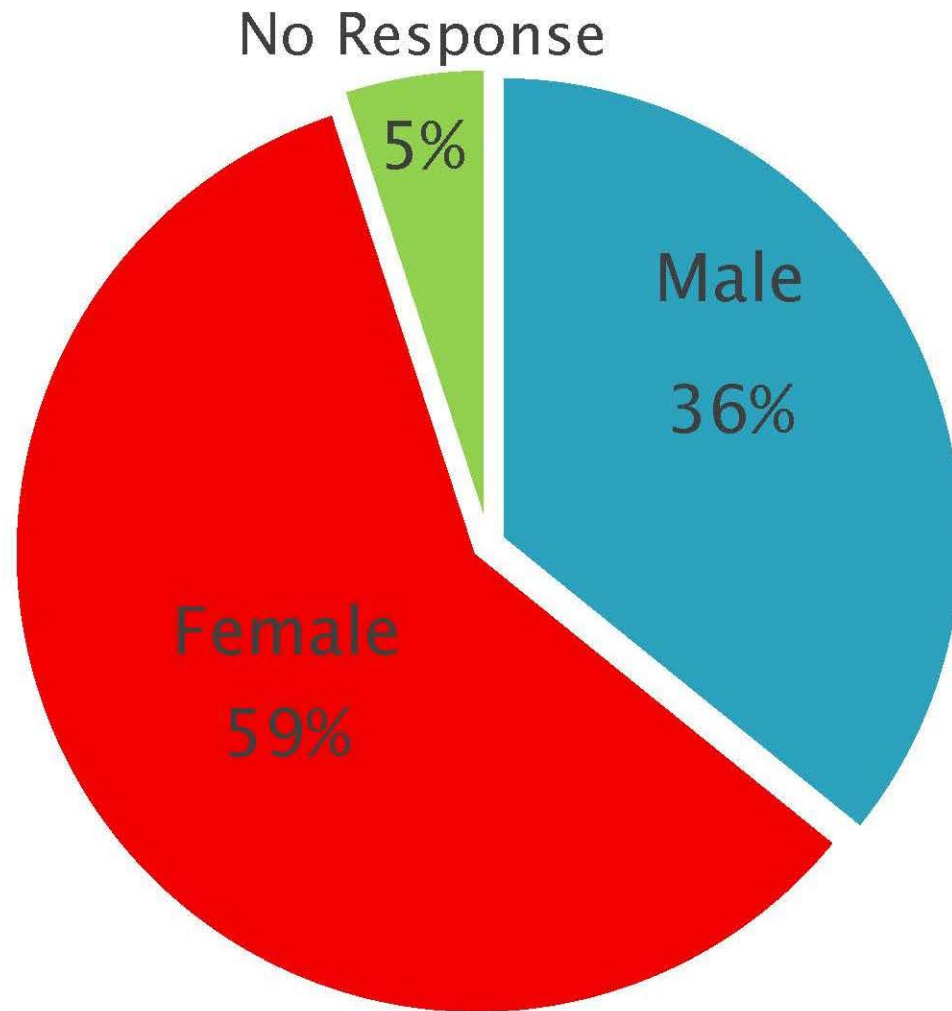Demographic Information (Optional)

Age: ☐ 18-24   ☐ 25-34   ☐ 35-44   ☐ 45-54   ☐ Over 55   ☐ Prefer not to say

Gender: ☐ Male   ☐ Female   ☐ Other: _____   ☐ Prefer not to say
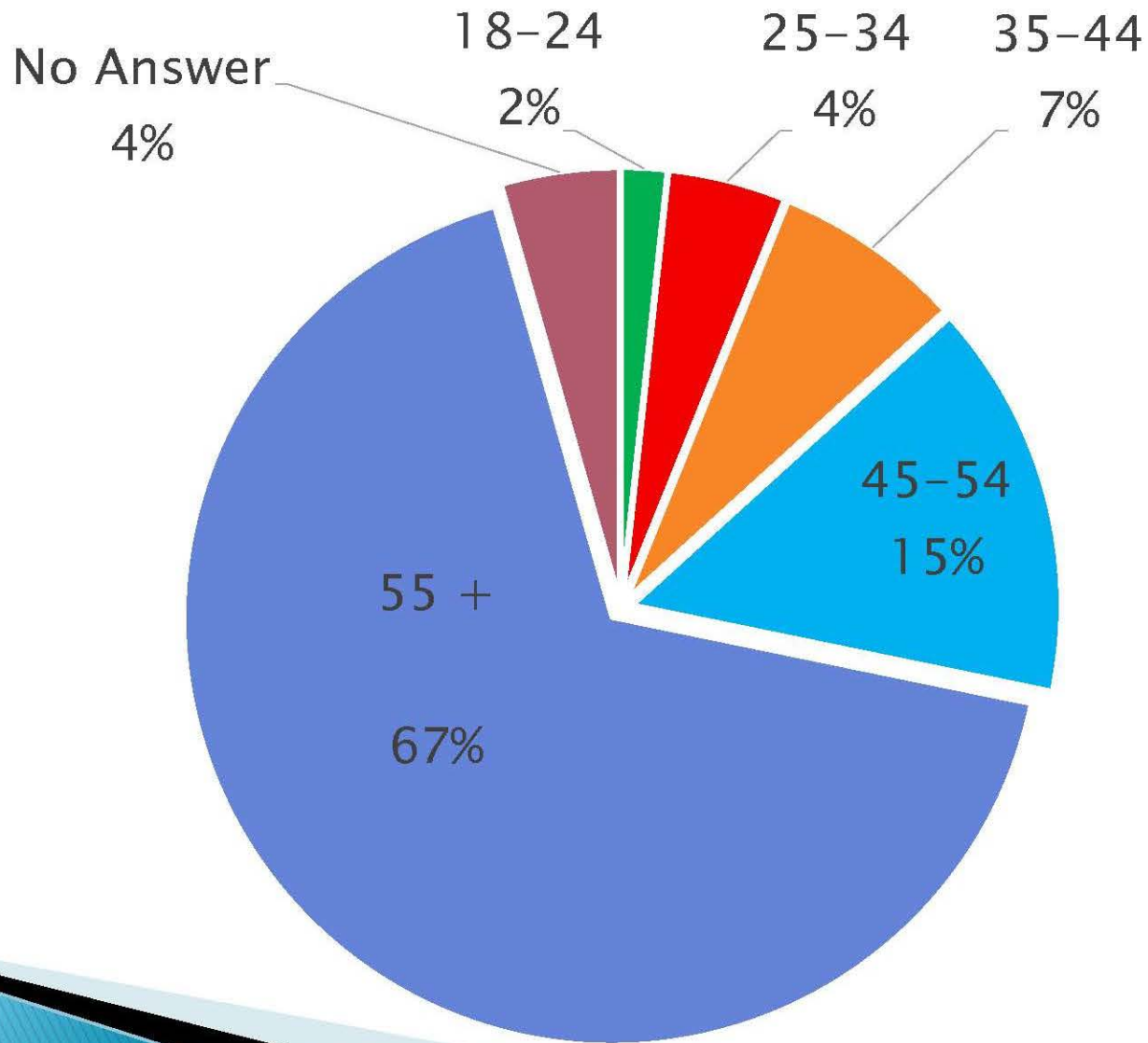
Race (Check all that apply)

☐ White / Caucasian
☐ Hispanic / Latino
☐ Black / African American
☐ African
☐ Asian / Pacific Islander
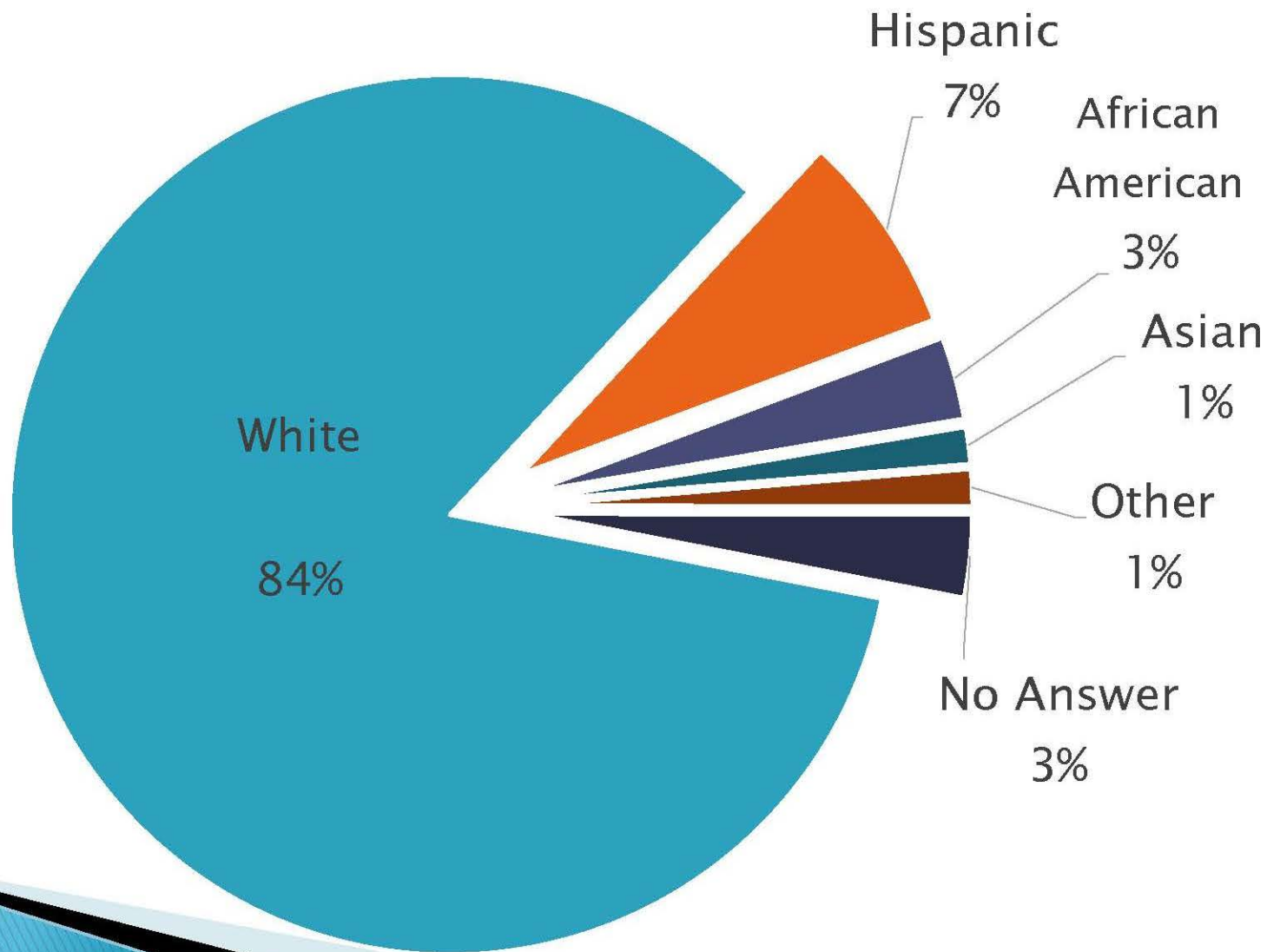☐ Native American / Alaskan Native
☐ Other: _____
☐ Prefer Not to Say

Breakdown by Gender

Breakdown by Age

Breakdown by Race

White 84%

Hispanic 7%

African American 3%

Asian 1%

Other 1%

No Answer 3%

Results: Demographics

▸ Respondents were most likely to be:

  ◦ White (84%)

  ◦ Female (59%)

  ◦ Over 55 years of age (67%)

▸ Changes from initial sample:
  ◦ Decrease in racial diversity (77% to 84% white)
  ◦ Increase in gender diversity (65% to 59% female)
  ◦ Slight Increase in age diversity (75% to 67% over 55 years of age)
  ◦ Majority of increase in representation among 45-54 age group (10% to 15%)

City of Worcester Demographics

- Gender:
  - Men 49%; Women 51%

    (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011)

- Race:
  - White: 57%
  - Hispanic: 21%
  - Black/African American: 12%
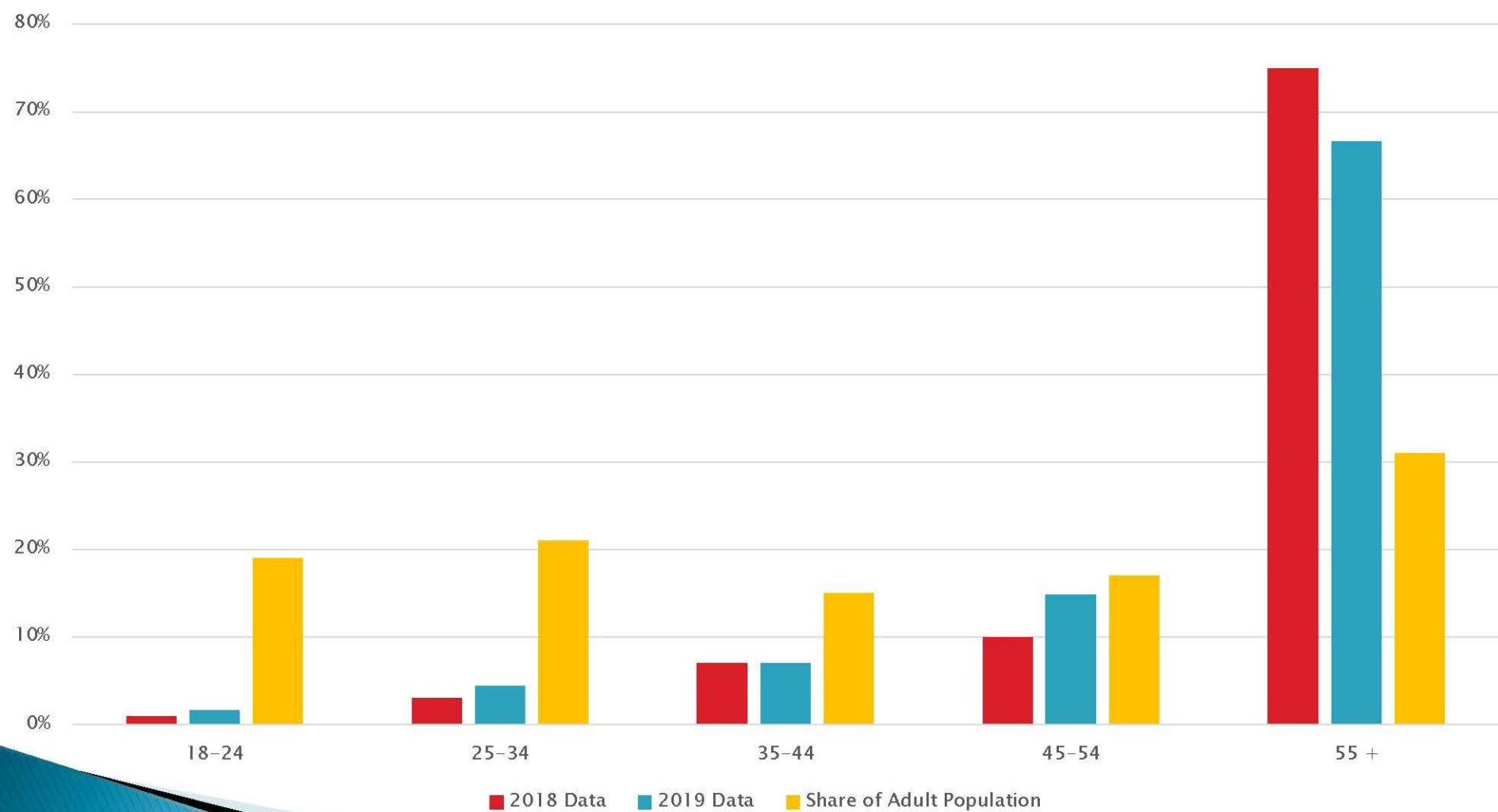 - Asian: 7.1%
  - Bi-Racial/Other: 3%

- Age
  - Median age: 34

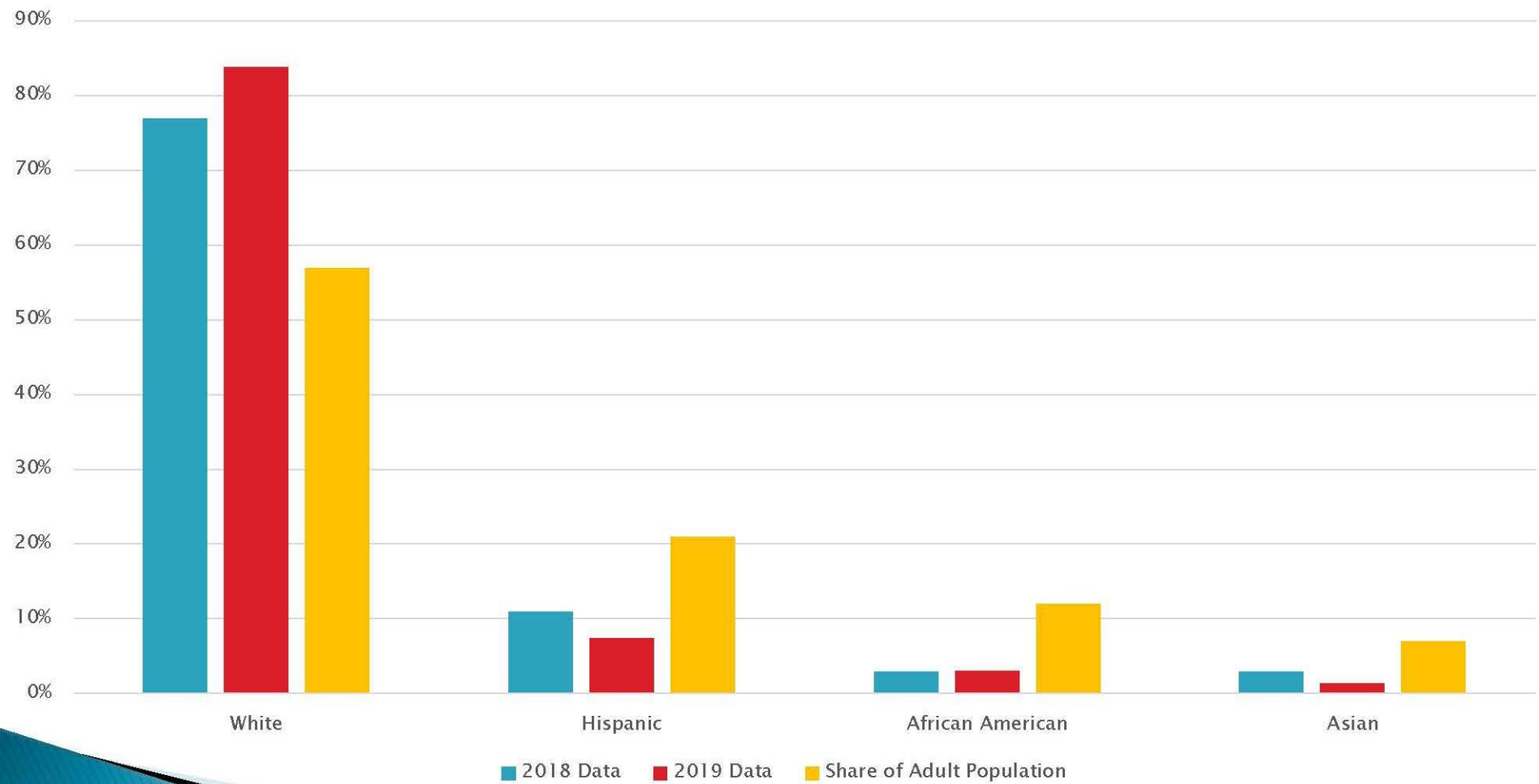(Worcester Research Bureau, 2018)

Comparative Breakdown by Age

Results: Representation

▸ Breakdown by age compared to the general population:

- Over 55 age group overrepresented in the data by double
  - (Respondents over 55=67%; Share of adult population=31%)

- 45-54 age group well-represented in the data
  - (Respondents 45-54=15%; Share of adult population=17%)

- 35-44 age group underrepresented in the data by half
  - (Respondents 45-54=7%; Share of adult population=15%)

- ≤ 35 age group underrepresented by a margin of 4 to 1
  - (Respondents under 35 =6%; Share of adult population=20%)

(Worcester Research Bureau, 2018)

Comparative Breakdown by Race

Results: Racial Representation

▸ **Breakdown by race compared to the general population:**

◦ White respondents were overrepresented in responses by 20%
  • (Share of Respondents=84%; Share of population=57%)

◦ Hispanic and Asian respondents were underrepresented by half
  • (Share of Respondents =11%; Share of population=21%)
  • (Share of Respondents =3%; Share of population=7%)

◦ Black/African American respondents were underrepresented in survey responses by three quarters
  • (Share of Respondents =3%; Share of population=12%)

(Data USA, 2017)

Results

- Respondents were divided into 3 groups:
  - Meeting Attendees
  - Organizers
  - Members of WPD Neighborhood Response Team

- Where available, 2018 limited data set compared to 2019 larger data set to measure changes evident in the larger sample size
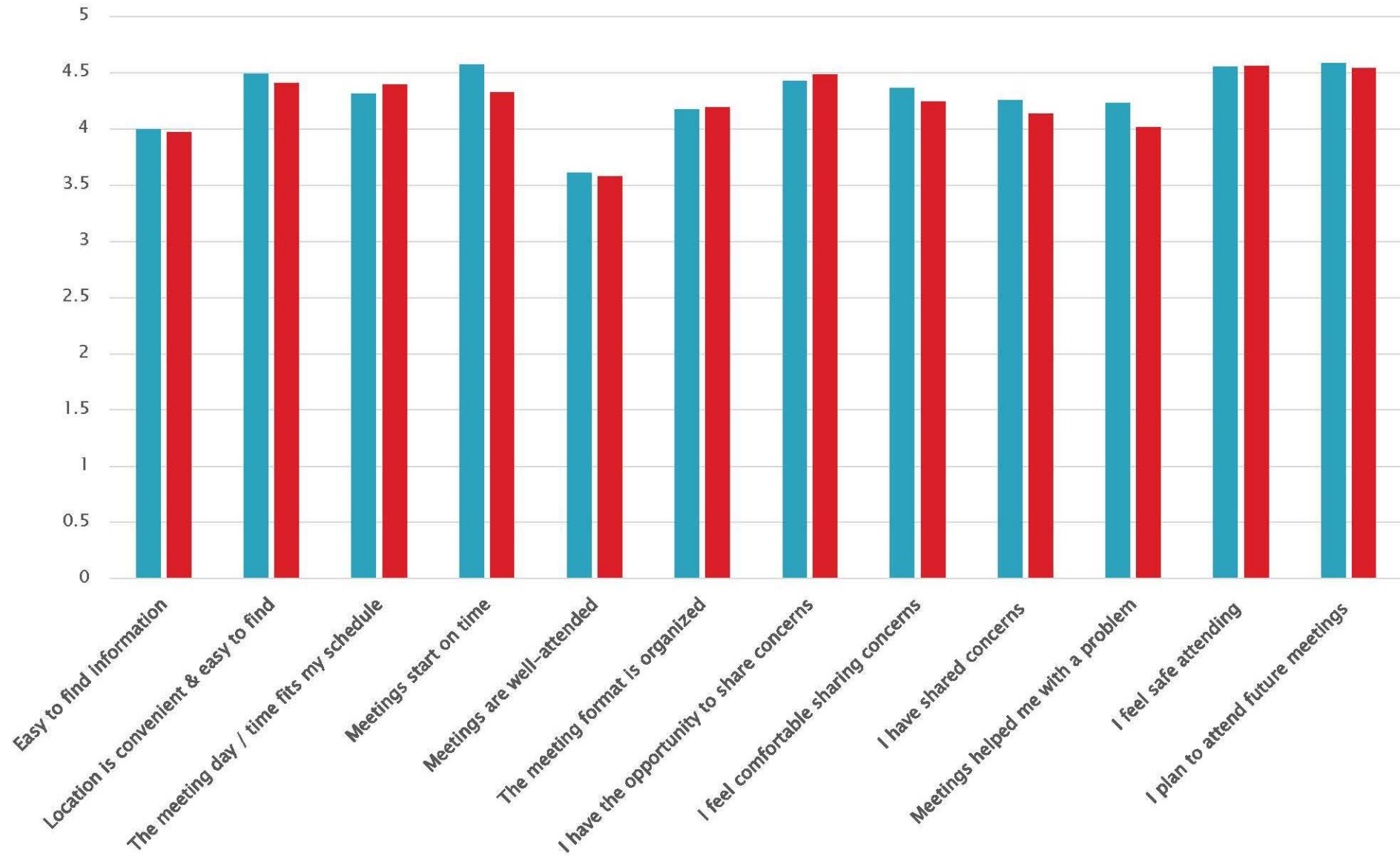
Results: Likert Responses (Attendees)

▸ Gauged respondents' views on 12 statements:

Please (circle) the number that best corresponds to you

1- Strongly Disagree   2- Disagree   3- Neither Agree nor Disagree   4- Agree   5 – Strongly Agree

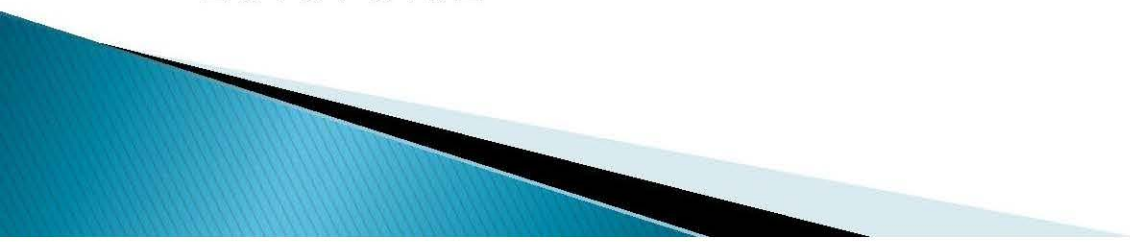|	Statement					
1.	It is easy to find information on Neighborhood Watch	1	2	3	4	5
2.	The location is convenient and easy to find	1	2	3	4	5
3.	The meeting day / time fits my schedule	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Meetings start on time	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Meetings are well-attended	1	2	3	4	5
6.	The meeting format is organized	1	2	3	4	5
7.	I have the opportunity to share concerns	1	2	3	4	5
8.	I feel comfortable sharing concerns	1	2	3	4	5
9.	I have shared concerns at Neighborhood Watch meetings	1	2	3	4	5
10.	Neighborhood Watch Meetings helped me with a problem	1	2	3	4	5
11.	I feel safe attending Neighborhood Watch Meetings	1	2	3	4	5
12.	I plan to attend future Neighborhood Watch Meetings	1	2	3	4	5

Results: Likert Scale Responses (Attendees)

Results: Likert Scale Responses (Attendees)

- Similar to smaller 2018 data set

- Increase in agreement from 2018 to 2019 in:
  - "Meetings are well-attended"

- Potential sample bias from 2018 data set
  - More "well-attended" meetings (based on NRT feedback of all meetings) were surveyed in 2019 data

Results: Likert Responses (Attendees)

▸ The following questions again scored 2 or more standard deviations below the total average rating of all individual responses:

◦ **"It's easy to find information"**
  - 2018: 3.97
  - 2019: 3.99

◦ **"Meetings are well–attended"**
  - 2018: 3.58
  - 2019: 3.62

Results: Attendee Feedback

- Most requested item continues to be access to more information about Neighborhood Watch meetings:

  ◦ 61% of respondents requested information (N=102)

  ◦ 27% of respondents requested social media updates (N=80)

  ◦ 26% of respondents requested email updates (N=22)

Organizer Surveys

- Included with letter explaining purpose
- First Page – Asked about meeting format, length of time, diversity, etc.
  - Likert questions:
    - "There are signs directing people where to go"
    - "Meeting attendees reflect the diversity of my neighborhood"
    - "I have enough resources to run meetings"

- Second Page – optional demographic information, resources, information for city

Date: _____   Meeting Location:_____

Organizer Name: _____ Official Title/Role (If applicable): _____

Which of the following are offered at your meetings? (Check All that Apply)

☐ Written Agenda   ☐ Meeting Minutes   ☐ Transportation   ☐ Refreshments
☐ Written Feedback   ☐ Email Updates   ☐ Child Care   ☐ Other:_____

How long have you facilitated this neighborhood watch meeting?

☐ Less than 1 year   ☐ 1-2 years   ☐ 2-4 years   ☐ Over 5 years

Who else helps facilitate neighborhood watch meetings?

☐ Chair/President   ☐ Vice Chair/VP   ☐ Treasurer   ☐ Clerk

☐ None   ☐ Other: _____

Meeting Demographics

What languages are spoken/written at your meeting? _____

How would you describe the diversity of your neighborhood watch group?

Age range   ☐ Very diverse   ☐ Somewhat diverse   ☐ Not very diverse   ☐ Not diverse

Racial Diversity ☐ Very diverse   ☐ Somewhat diverse   ☐ Not very diverse   ☐ Not diverse

Gender   ☐ Very diverse   ☐ Somewhat diverse   ☐ Not very diverse   ☐ Not diverse

Economic Status   ☐ Very diverse   ☐ Somewhat diverse   ☐ Not very diverse   ☐ Not diverse

Please circle the number that best corresponds to you

1- Strongly Disagree   2- Disagree   3- Neither Agree nor Disagree   4- Agree   5 – Strongly Agree

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Information on meetings is available and easily accessible	1	2	3	4	5
2. The location is convenient and easy to find	1	2	3	4	5
3. The meeting day / time is convenient for everyone	1	2	3	4	5
4. There are signs directing people where to go	1	2	3	4	5
5. Meetings are well-attended	1	2	3	4	5
6. Meeting attendees reflect the diversity of my neighborhood	1	2	3	4	5
7. Community members are invited to share concerns	1	2	3	4	5
8. I have enough resources to run meetings	1	2	3	4	5
9. There is good communication with the city	1	2	3	4	5
10. Meetings are effective at helping people address problems	1	2	3	4	5
11. It is easy to recruit new neighbors to join meetings	1	2	3	4	5
12. Meeting attendance is growing	1	2	3	4	5

Tell us about yourself (Optional)

<u>Demographic Information</u>

<u>Age:</u>   ☐ 18-24   ☐ 25-34   ☐ 35-44   ☐ 45-54   ☐ Over 55   ☐ Prefer not to say

<u>Gender:</u>   ☐ Male   ☐ Female   ☐ Other: _____   ☐ Prefer not to say

<u>Race (Check all that apply)</u>
☐ White / Caucasian
☐ Hispanic / Latino
☐ Black / African American
☐ African
☐ Asian / Pacific Islander
☐ Native American / Alaskan Native
☐ Other: _____
☐ Prefer Not to Say

Organizer Feedback Questions

What aspects of your meeting are you most proud of? What is working really well? _____
_____

What is your ideal vision of a successful neighborhood watch meeting group? _____
_____

What are the most difficult aspects of your meeting? What do you struggle most with? _____
_____

What is one thing about the meetings that you would change if you could? _____
_____

What resources would help you be most successful in your meetings? _____
_____

What do you think is the most important thing for the city to know about neighborhood watch meetings?
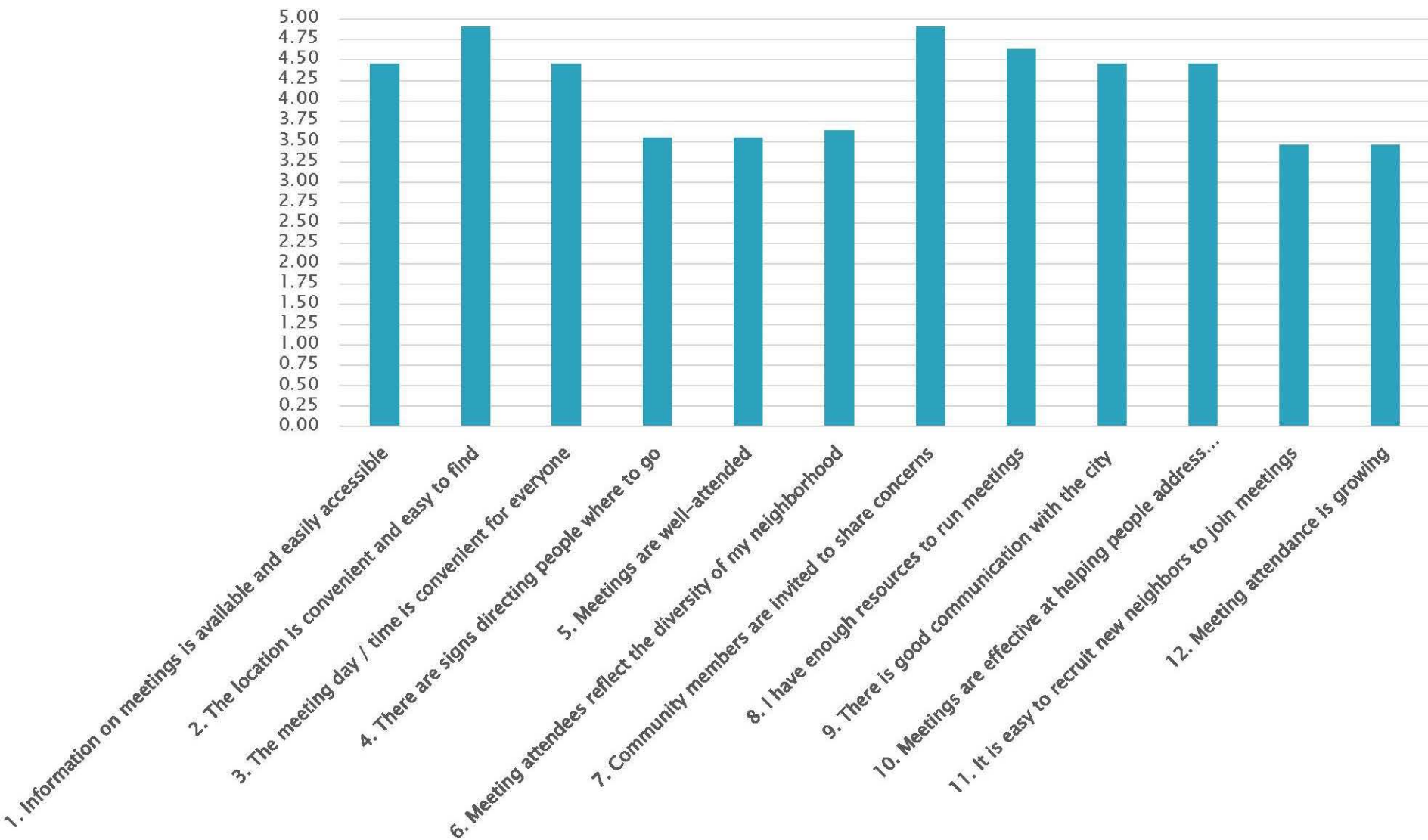_____

What advice would you share with other neighborhood watch meeting organizers/facilitators?
_____

What do you think of the surveys and this process? Is there anything you would add/change?
_____

Any additional questions, comments, concerns? _____
_____

Thank you!

Results: Likert Responses (Organizers)

Results: Likert Responses (Organizers)

▸ The following questions scored an average rating of 4.5 / 5 across organizer responses:
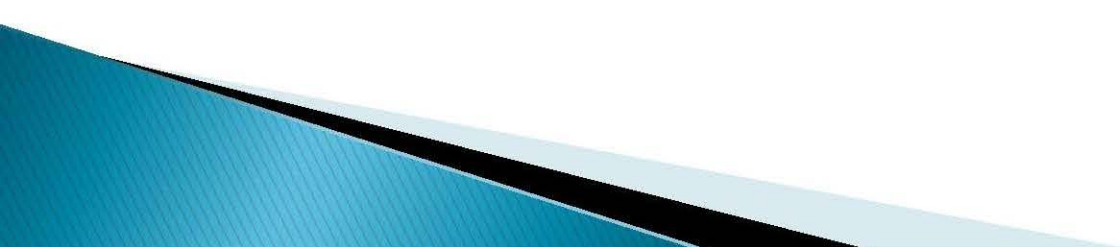
"The location is convenient and easy to find"

"Community members are invited to share concerns"

"I have enough resources to run meetings"

Results: Likert Responses

▶ The following questions scored 2 or more standard deviations below the total average rating of all individual responses:

- ◦ "There are signs directing people where to go"

- ◦ "Meetings are well-attended"

- ◦ "Meeting attendees reflect the diversity of my neighborhood"

Results: Organizer Feedback

- Organizers reported wanting to increase attendance and diversity at meetings
  - Most frequent response for "ideal vision" referenced increased attendance
  - Most frequent response to what they are "most struggling with" referenced outreach and increasing attendance/diversity
  - Most frequent response to question on "one thing you could change"

Officer Surveys

▸ Distributed to members of WPD Neighborhood Response Team

- First page – questions about meetings overall
  - Average number of requests, time spent on follow up, etc.
  - General impressions, reactions to survey

- Second page – questions specific to each meeting
  - One copy of the second page completed for each individual meeting

Meeting Location(s) Supported: _____

_____

On average, what is the total weekly time you spend preparing for meetings and/or conducting follow up?

☐ > 1 hour ☐ 1-2 hours ☐ 2-4 hours ☐ 4-5 hours ☐ 5+ hours ☐ Other: _____

What is the average number of formal requests/questions/problems requiring follow up per meeting?

☐ 0-5 ☐ 5-10 ☐ 10-15 ☐ 15+

How much does this vary by time/meeting location? _____

How much of these requests are directly related to addressing criminal activity / crime prevention?

☐ 0-25% ☐ 25-50% ☐ 50-75% ☐ 75-100%

Survey Initiative Questions
Since the survey initiative began, have you noticed any changes? _____

_____

Have you done anything differently and/or noticed others doing things differently? _____

_____

Are there questions that should be added to the survey? _____

_____

What do you think of the surveys and process overall? Is there anything you would add/change?

_____

Are there other initiatives currently taking place, or that should be taking place to improve NW meetings?

_____

General Feedback on NW Meetings
What sort of impact do you see NW Meetings have on the community? _____

_____

How have NW Meetings changed your perspective on community policing? _____

_____

What advice would you share with other officers taking part in NW meetings? _____

_____

What is the most important thing for the city to know about NW meetings?

_____

Are NW meetings effective the way they are, or are there things that could be improved? If so, what?

_____

Any additional questions, comments, concerns? _____

Please complete a separate page for each meeting location

Meeting Location: _____

How long have you supported this neighborhood watch meeting?
☐ Less than 1 year ☐ 1-2 years ☐ 2-4 years ☐ Over 5 years

What is your role at this meeting?
☐ Read crime stats ☐ Relay city/WPD Initiatives ☐ Facilitate Meeting ☐ Advertise/Recruit
☐ Answer questions ☐ Follow up on problems ☐ Other: _____

What languages are spoken/written? _____

How would you describe the diversity of this NW meeting location?

Age range	☐ Very diverse	☐ Somewhat diverse	☐ Not very diverse	☐ Not diverse
Racial Diversity	☐ Very diverse	☐ Somewhat diverse	☐ Not very diverse	☐ Not diverse
Gender	☐ Very diverse	☐ Somewhat diverse	☐ Not very diverse	☐ Not diverse
Economic Status	☐ Very diverse	☐ Somewhat diverse	☐ Not very diverse	☐ Not diverse

Please circle the number that best corresponds to you

1- Strongly Disagree 2- Disagree 3- Neither Agree nor Disagree	4- Agree	5 – Strongly Agree			
1. Meeting information is available and easily accessible	1	2	3	4	5
2. The location is convenient for public access and easy to find	1	2	3	4	5
3. The meeting day / time is convenient for everyone	1	2	3	4	5
4. There are signs directing people where to go	1	2	3	4	5
5. Meetings at this location are well-attended	1	2	3	4	5
6. Meeting attendees reflect the diversity of the neighborhood	1	2	3	4	5
7. Community members are invited to share concerns	1	2	3	4	5
8. We have enough resources to run meetings	1	2	3	4	5
9. There is good communication with the city	1	2	3	4	5
10. This meeting is effective at helping the public address problems	1	2	3	4	5
11. It is easy to recruit new neighbors to join meetings	1	2	3	4	5
12. Meeting attendance at this location is growing	1	2	3	4	5

Meeting-Specific Officer Feedback Questions

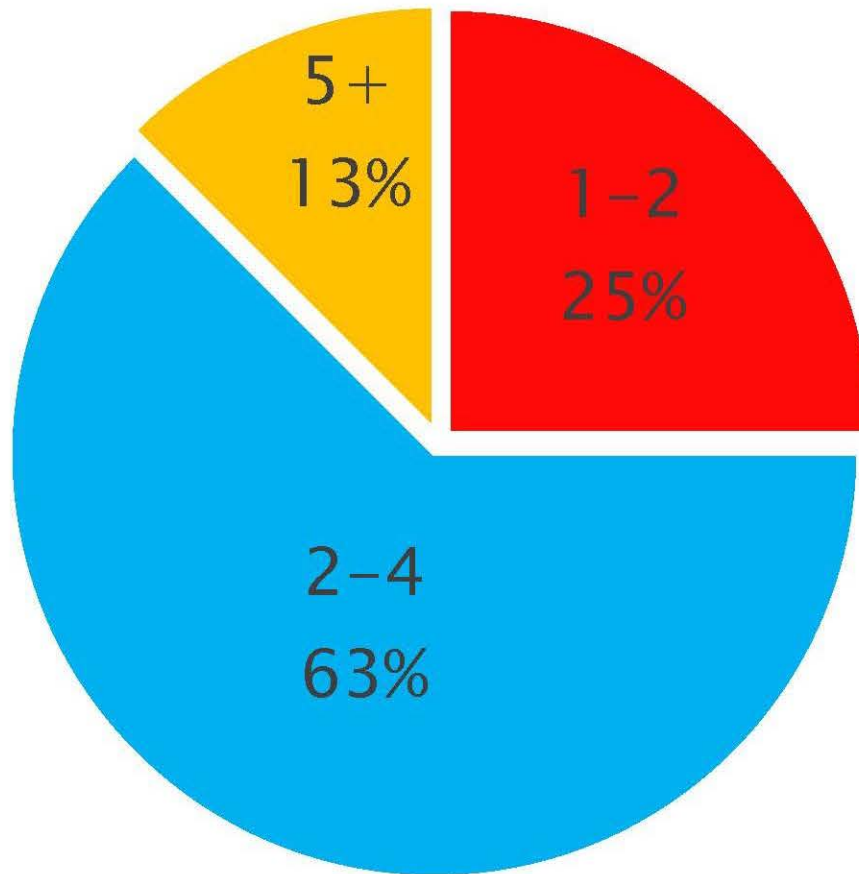What aspects of this meeting work well? _____
_____

What are the biggest challenges of this meeting? _____
_____

What is one thing about this meeting you would change if you could? _____
_____

What changes/resources could improve the effectiveness of this meeting? _____
_____

Additional comments about this meeting? _____

Average Weekly Hours Spent Following up on Meeting Requests

Results: Officer Feedback

- Neighborhood Response Team Officers spend 1 – 5+ hours per week preparing for meetings and conducting follow up
- 63% reported spending an average of 2-4 hours per week

- Unanimously reported an average of 5-10 formal requests, questions or problems requiring follow up per meeting
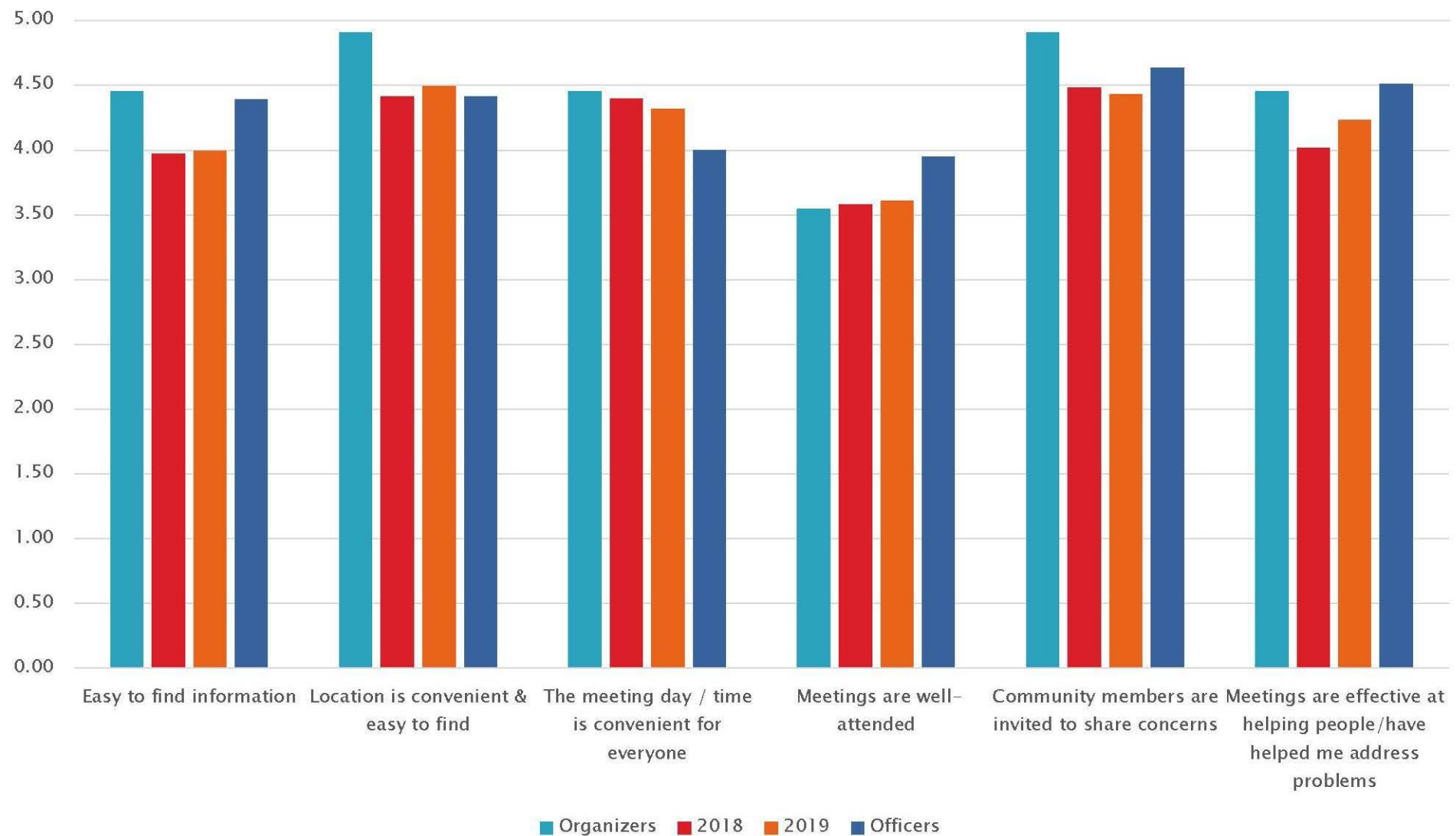
Perceptions Between Groups

- Some of the same questions were asked of attendees, organizers and officers

- Purpose to measure whether perceptions were the same or varied between each group

Results: Officer Feedback

▸ Universally reported positive quality of life issues are addressed through Neighborhood Watch Meetings

▸ Changes to perspective from running meetings included:
  ◦ "Better understanding of what the public finds important"
  ◦ "Positive interaction with the community"

▸ Response to "most important thing for city to know" included:
  ◦ "Meetings build a relationship with the community"
  ◦ Foster "personal connection between police and public"
  ◦ Positive "interaction with civilians"
  ◦ Building trust between community members and police
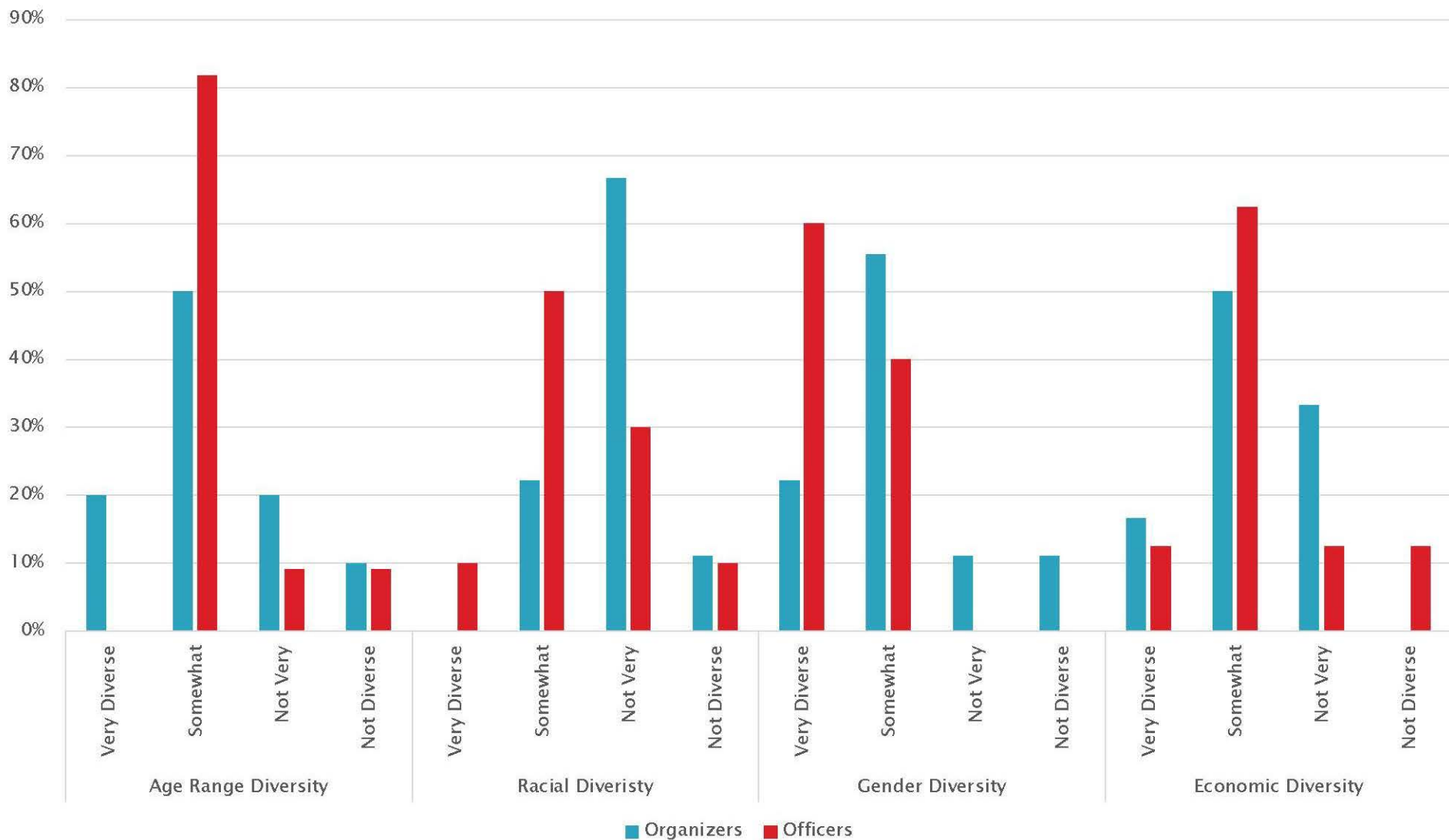
Perceptions Between Groups

Perceptions Between Groups

- Meeting organizers more likely to agree with the statement:
  - "The meeting location is convenient and easy to find"
  - "Community members are invited to share concerns"

- Officers and organizers more likely to agree with the statement:
  - "Meetings are effective at helping people solve problems"

- Attendees less likely to agree with mirror statement:
  - "Meetings have helped me with a problem"

Perceptions on Meeting Diversity

Perceptions on Meeting Diversity

- Both groups noticed when groups were observed to be very homogenous in terms of age and race

- However, perceptions of diversity appear to differ between groups
- Officers appear more likely to notice lack of age and economic diversity in meetings

- Organizers appear more likely to notice lack of racial and gender diversity

- Qualitatively, observers (survey administrators), who tended to be young and more racially diverse, nearly universally reported lack of diversity post-survey follow up

Limitations

▸ **Sample size**
  ◦ Not all meetings were attended (78%)
  ◦ Not all organizers were surveyed

▸ **Potential for maturation**
  ◦ Survey period occurred over more than one year

▸ **Incomplete surveys**
  ◦ Decreased sample size of certain variables
  ◦ Decreased ability to identify meeting-specific trends
  ◦ Decreased potential to identify additional trends in data set

▸ **Potential for inhibited responding**
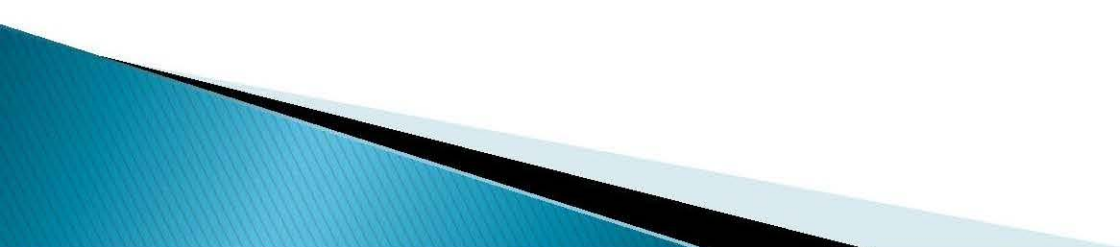 ◦ Some survey responses did not match qualitative data

Follow-up

- Data Collection will continue
  - The Human Rights Commission will continue to partner with WPD and organizers
    - Multiple baseline design across participants
    - Systematic dissemination of door hangers and measuring meeting attendance over subsequent 3 months

- Goals:
  - Identify strategies to increase survey attendance and diversity of meeting attendees

Conclusions

- Meetings have positive effects on the community:
  - Improved relationship between WPD and community members who attend
  - Play vital role of informal social control and community policing

Conclusions (cont'd)

- All stakeholders identified continued areas for growth:
  - Residents want more information
    - On city's web site, in public spaces, on social media, via email, via newspaper

  - Organizers, officers and residents want to see attendance increase
    - Organizers/attendees requesting help of police department
    - In Lieu of other avenues, WPD has been conducting outreach on behalf of residents
    - WPD conducting outreach alone contributes to confusion these are WPD-run meetings
  - Meetings lack age & racial diversity of neighborhoods they support
  - Information is not reaching all community members
  - Organizers lack resources to meet these needs
  - Systems are needed to help organizers access existing resources
  - Additional resources are needed to address existing problems

Conclusions (cont'd)

▸ This initiative raised additional issues and questions:

- No identified stakeholder / liaison within the city to partner with meeting organizers and Worcester Police Department

- Who is ultimately responsible for providing resources?

- How are / will identified resources be funded?

- Who is the Human Rights Commission providing these recommendations to?

- Who is responsible for implementing recommendations?

Responsibility and Accessibility

- Is the city obligated to provide officers at Neighborhood Meetings?
- If so, are meetings required to be accessible?
- If not, and a community member's meeting is not accessible, is the city required to assist the individual to start a new meeting by providing access an officer?
- If the city does not support meetings created due to lack of accessibility, this could be considered discriminatory

Recommendations

Increase Inclusivity

1. Change name to "Neighborhood Meetings"
2. Continue to work to identify causes of underrepresentation

Increase Information

3. Identify one universal name for each meeting
4. Create map of meetings with times and locations for each pin
5. Ensure all attendees are able to access information

Increase communication between city and organizers

5. Create contact list for business associations, liaisons within each city department, local social service agencies, etc.
6. Create voluntary contact distribution list to allow city to send announcements to organizers to share at meetings

Recommendations

Increase City Integration

7. Remove schedule conflicts with City Council meetings
8. Create workflows for organizers to request municipal support
9. Create mechanism for accountability for city assistance

Increase Resources

10. Make public spaces available for meetings
11. Make training and reference materials available to organizers
12. Create written reference materials for organizers to utilize
13. Hold semi-annual organizer meetings

Recommendations

Improve Outreach

14. Post signage in nearby public spaces and in meeting locations
15. Create and distribute master list of meetings, including times, locations and contact information
16. Provide municipal support to current WPD and organizer outreach efforts
17. Make information searchable and easier to find on city's website
18. Advertise on city's Facebook page
19. Ask city councilors to spread awareness among constituents

Increase Accountability

19. Identify who is responsible for following through with recommendations
20. Identify municipal stakeholder to partner with WPD and organizers
21. Determine who is ultimately responsible for funding and other resources

Get Involved

- If interested in joining ongoing efforts, please contact us:

  ◦ By Email: humanrights@worcesterma.gov

  ◦ By Phone: 508-799-8486

References

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https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/worcestercitymassachusetts/PST045216

Worcester Research Bureau, Inc. (2018). *The Worcester Almanac 2018* [18-04]. Retrieved
from http://www.wrrb.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/WRRB-Worcester-Almanac-2018.pdf